



Personal Pathways to success™

TRIDENT REGIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

**A Needs Assessment of the Trident Region
including an inventory of resources and gap analysis
for the Trident Regional Education Center (TREC)**

RE: 080311-110CB-918-03/03/27/08

June 30, 2008

**PO Box 975
Charleston, SC 29402-0975**

Trident Regional Education Center

Background:

On May 27, 2005, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford signed the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) into law. The law required the development of a curriculum aligned with state content standards and organized around a career cluster system. The Act also required the Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council, EEDCC (the managing body of the Act) to designate regional education centers (RECs) to coordinate and facilitate the delivery of information, resources, and services to students, educators, employers, and the community - the stakeholders of the regional education centers.

The primary responsibilities of the centers are to:

- (1) provide services to students and adults for career planning, employment seeking, training, and other support functions;
- (2) provide information, resources, and professional development programs to educators;
- (3) provide resources to school districts for EEDA compliance and accountability;
- (4) provide information and resources to employers including, but not limited to, education partnerships, career-oriented learning, and training services;
- (5) facilitate local connections among businesses and those involved in education; and
- (6) work with school districts and institutions of higher education to create and coordinate workforce education programs.

Consistent with the requirements of the Act, Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties, received the necessary legislative appointments for advisory board members, held its inaugural meeting on January 25, 2007 and became the Trident Regional Education Center Advisory Board or Trident RECAB.

The RECAB, regional leaders who outline the operational parameters of the Trident Regional Education Center (TREC), was then charged to conduct an inventory and gap analysis that would provide a picture of what is happening in the tri-county region in relation to the six regional education center responsibilities.

Initially, the RECAB coordinator conducted introductory interviews with a sample population of Trident stakeholders including educators, adult learners, students, parents, service agencies, and employers to understand the potential regional needs. The introductory sessions identified such gaps as limited K-12 work-based learning options, low skill level of potential employees, lack of hands-on learning in K – 12, little awareness of Personal Pathways to Success and limited employee training opportunities in rural areas.

In December of 2007, the EED CC Regional Education Center Committee finalized a request for proposal process that allowed regional education centers with completed strategic plans to apply for a Service Building grant to be used to complete the regional gap analysis.

The Trident RECAB applied in January 2008 and was awarded and approved to receive the grant in February 2008. This allowed the RECAB to contract through its fiscal agent, Trident Technical College, with a research provider to conduct a needs assessment of the entire region. Following a local request for proposal process managed by the Trident Technical College in April 2008, The Center for Business Research of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce was awarded the contract to conduct the inventory gap analysis for the Trident RECAB.

Center for Business Research

The Center for Business Research, CBR, founded in 1990 as a department of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, compiles, analyzes and distributes economic and demographic information on the Charleston region. Conducting both primary and secondary research, the Center is a resource for unbiased statistics in the business, demographic and economic arena. The work of the Center has been recognized nationally through numerous awards and presentations.

The Center for Business Research includes within this report the development of an inventory of current providers, their location and existing client populations that utilize the providers' resources. Using the six regional education center responsibilities as a basis, the assessment report also identifies the needs of the students, employers, parents, educators and adult learners – all the clients of the Trident Regional Education Center. Finally, the assessment includes a gap analysis, prepared by the Trident RECAB, which identifies needs not being fulfilled by existing providers. The board members also identified strategic initiatives that would prove successful in addressing the regional needs.

Methodology:

1. **Inventory of Current Providers**

A search of the Educational Services North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categories for the Charleston MSA, resulted in 357 total organizations offering some type of education or training service. The NAICS category includes everything from the public school districts, colleges and universities to karate and dance classes.

To gain specific information for this study, The Center for Business Research compiled an inventory of providers of training and educational services through a number of resources, including the TriCounty Community Resource Directory, Reference USA, the Charleston County Public Library and other resources. A total of 114 non-profit and/or public agencies were identified.

The Center for Business Research then called each of the providers and successfully interviewed 37 total agencies to better understand the scope of services, their client base and to understand challenges and obstacles in fulfilling their mission. For the most part, agencies and organizations cited funding as their biggest obstacle – if there were more resources available, they could expand their services. Transportation was also cited as a challenge. Clients are unable to reach the provider to access services due to a lack of transportation.

Upon further synthesis of the data, the service providers indicated that their programs needed greater awareness within the Trident region in order to attract the residents who could greatly benefit from the services. Several agencies also identified partnerships and collaboration as a needed resource for the effective execution of their services. This appears to be an opportunity for TREC to serve as a clearinghouse of information for the service providers and their clients. TREC will continue to expand the regional provider list. TREC will also host the list on its web site as well as promote it within the Trident communities.

2. **Assessment of needs of students, parents, educators, and adult learners**

In order to assess the needs of students, parents, educators and adult learners, the Center for Business Research designed a short survey to be distributed to each population. Each of the region's four public school districts were contacted and agreed to help distribute the surveys.

In Berkeley County, the administration distributed both the electronic version of the survey via email as well as distributed paper copies. In Dorchester District 4, paper copies were distributed, collected and returned to the Center for Business Research. In Dorchester District 2, paper copies were distributed and then collected via the District office. Where paper surveys were used, a postage-paid, pre-addressed return envelope was provided with each parent survey.

In Charleston County, the educator survey was distributed through the District's public information office to all middle and high school principals. School Principals distributed the electronic survey to educators. For students and parents, the District provided the Center for Business Research a list of proposed schools and sample sizes for each school. The Center for Business Research then contacted each individual school principal and distributed the surveys.

In addition to the School Districts, PTA presidents throughout each of the three counties were contacted and provided an email link to the parent survey and asked to help distribute the

surveys. A live link was placed through an ad on www.charleston.net as an additional means of distribution.

The survey process including the creation of the instruments and the distribution of surveys to students, parents and educators was conducted between April 14 and June 3, 2008.

For the adult learning population, surveys were distributed through the School District's adult learning/GED offices. One local television station (WCSC – Channel 5) also featured a Midday segment about the survey and provided a live link to it on the station's website.

3. Assessment of needs of employers

Simultaneously with this needs assessment on behalf of TREC, the Center for Business Research also conducted a region-wide, web-based workforce survey of employers to identify their current and anticipated workforce skill needs in the Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester region. The study was conducted on behalf of the Trident Workforce Investment Board so that curriculum and training resources in the region might be better aligned to meet the skill needs of employers and the jobs within the 16 industry clusters identified as the region's focus for future job growth.

The Center for Business Research formed a region-wide task force to serve in an advisory capacity to help determine appropriate survey questions as well as to help in distributing the survey and promoting participation. Professionals who served on the taskforce included representatives of organizations such as the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, Greater Summerville/Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, Charleston Regional Development Alliance, Trident Workforce Investment Board, Trident Regional Education Center Advisory Board, TCHRM/SHRM, and Lowcountry Manufacturers Council.

Once survey questions were determined, the Center developed an electronic questionnaire using SurveyMonkey, an online survey design and analysis tool. A link to the survey was provided to all members of the task force to distribute to their own constituencies. The Center for Business Research also emailed a link to the survey to all 2,200 members of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce.

The survey was promoted through local media, including the *Charleston Regional Business Journal's* Daily Journal, an electronic newsletter that included information about the survey as well as a link to the online questionnaire.

Finally, the Center for Business Research called major employers, manufacturers and other employers within each of the targeted clusters (Advanced Security, Automotive, Aviation & Aerospace, Biosciences and Creative) to ask for employers to participate. It is estimated more than 300 companies were contacted with a personal phone call. When an organization agreed to participate, they were emailed a link to the survey.

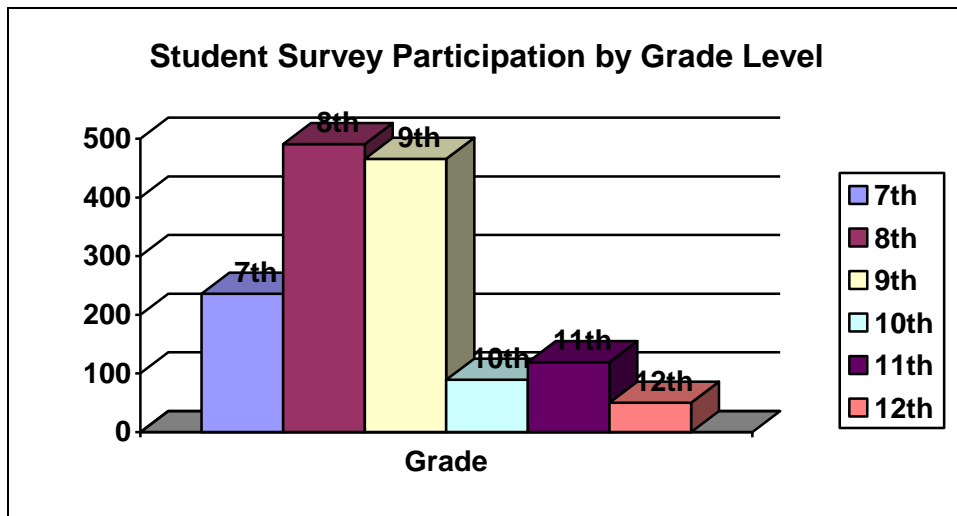
For questions about methodology, please contact the Center for Business Research:
Center for Business Research
Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 975
Charleston SC 29402
843-577-2510

Survey Results:

Students

A total of 1,451 surveys were collected and analyzed from students in grades seven through 12 in each of the four public school districts. Students were geographically disbursed throughout the tri-county region and represented both rural and urban schools.

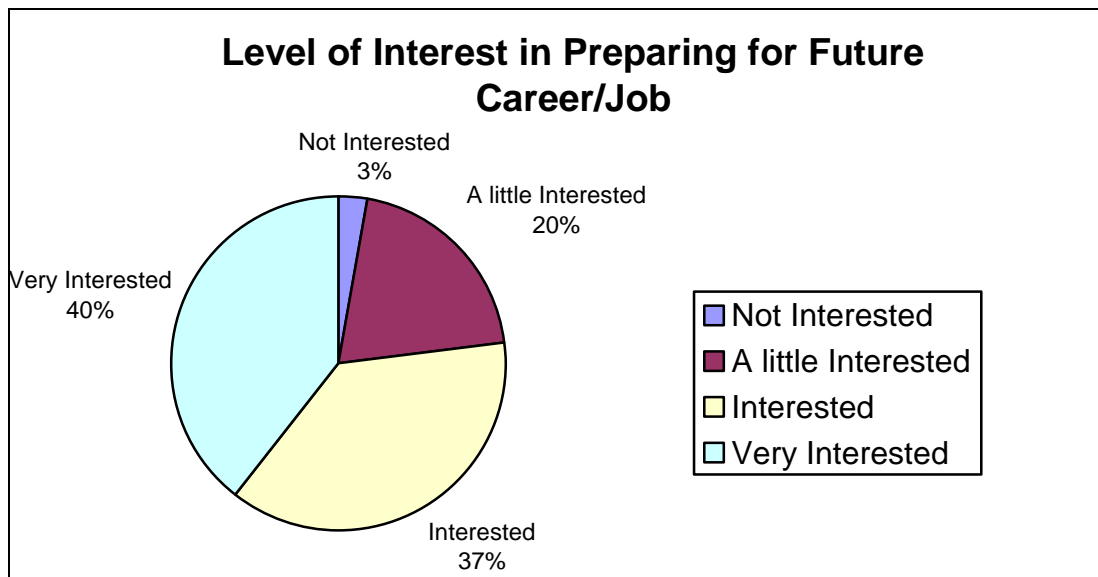
There was a higher participation rate among Middle School and ninth graders than 10th, 11th and 12th grade students.



In which area do you live?	% Students
Adams Run, Edisto, Hollywood, Ravenel	1.03%
Awendaw or McClellanville	0.41%
Bonneau, St. Stephen or Jamestown	3.24%
Daniel Island, Cainhoy, Wando or Huger	1.38%
Hanahan, Goose Creek or Mt. Holly	12.34%
Harleyville, Reevesville, Ridgeville or St. George	5.31%
James Island or Folly Beach	3.51%
Johns Island or Wadmalaw	2.83%
Moncks Corner	5.65%
Mt. Pleasant, Isle of Palms or Sullivans Island	7.86%
North Charleston or Ladson	28.88%
Peninsula Charleston	2.55%
Summerville	12.54%
West Ashley	7.93%
Other	3.45%
Unreported or Unknown	1.10%
Total 1,451 student surveys	100.00%

Interest in Career Preparation

Students were asked to rate their interest in starting now to prepare for a future career/job. The majority of students (76.9%) indicated they were “Interested” or “Very Interested”. Less than three percent indicated they were not interested. On a scale of one to four, with one being least interested and four most interested, the overall student rating was 3.14.



South Carolina Career Clusters/Career Pathways

Students were asked about the career clusters publicized in the Personal Pathways initiative. One third of the students surveyed indicated they were not familiar with the career clusters/career pathways available in their school district or “don’t know/not sure.”

Potentially, for TREC, this means over 12,000 students in grades seven through 12 in the region don’t know or don’t understand the Personal Pathways program. This finding presents an opportunity for deeper awareness of the career clusters.

Career Planning

To assess the students’ career planning needs, they were asked how they find career information, and if they talk to their parent/guardian about their future job/career. 87.1 percent of the students answered “yes” to this question. In contrast, 12.9 percent indicated they did not discuss their future job or career with their parents/guardians.

This information suggests that providing parents with relevant career information may prove to be a great avenue for sharing career information with students. Thus, TREC should consider the creation of relevant career information that parents could readily access.

High on the list for finding career information for most students was the Internet. The Internet is the most used method for students to obtain information about preparing for future jobs and careers. 63 percent of students indicated that was their source and the school guidance counselor was sourced by 20 percent of students.

The students also provided suggestions on ways the school district or other community organization could provide help in preparing them for a future job/career. The answers most often quoted by the students include more career days, relevant classes in their areas of

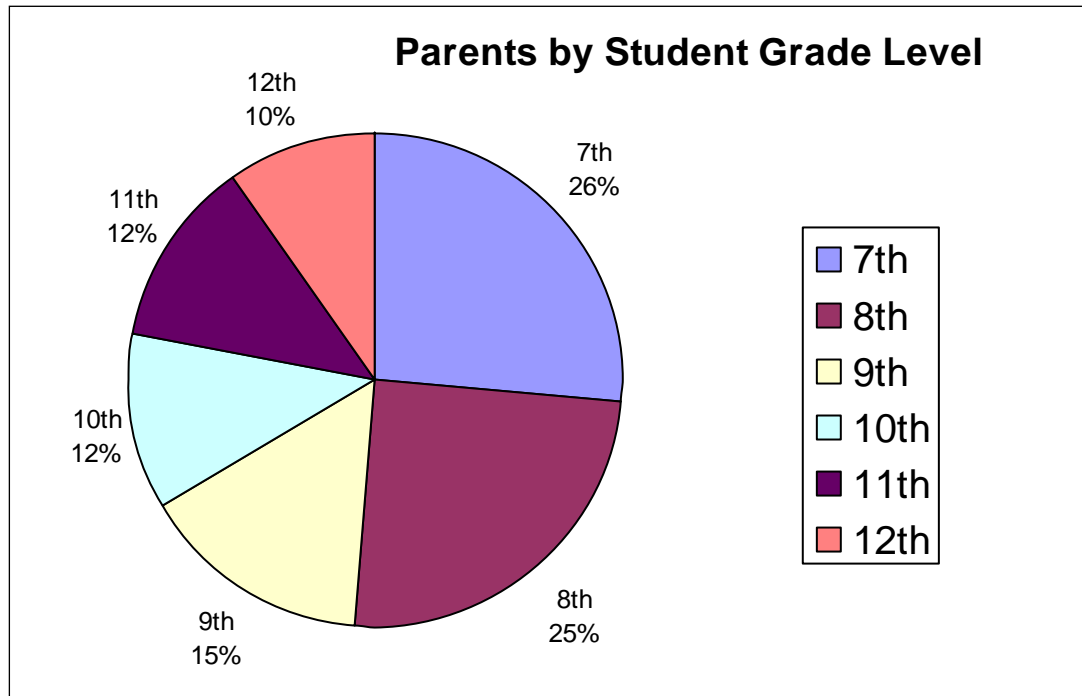
interest, internships, job shadowing and guest speakers. While some students provided several avenues for the community to consider, many students commented that they didn't know what information or services they need to help them prepare for future jobs/careers. These findings easily suggest a need for career awareness strategies for regional students and suggest the Internet and the school guidance departments as the initial sources of career information. The data was also verified by the regional gap analysis review held on June 25 at the Woodland High School in Dorchester County School District Four where several students attended. The students who represented 10th through 12th graders agreed with the student suggestions and reiterated a need for more hands-on career related equipment, career-related books and computers.

Parents

A total of 553 parent surveys were collected and analyzed for the assessment. Parents represented students in grades seven through 12 and were geographically disbursed throughout the tri-county region.

Zip Code Area	# Parents	% of Parents
Berkeley	1	0.2%
Charleston AFB	1	0.2%
Cordesville	3	0.5%
Cross	5	0.9%
Daniel Island	11	2.0%
Folly Beach	4	0.7%
Goose Creek	144	25.7%
Grover	1	0.2%
Huger	2	0.4%
James Island	18	3.2%
Jamestown	9	1.6%
Johns Island	13	2.3%
Ladson	37	6.6%
McClellanville	1	0.2%
Meggett	3	0.5%
Moncks Corner	77	13.8%
Mt. Pleasant	2	0.4%
Mt. Pleasant	8	1.4%
North Charleston	4	0.7%
North Charleston	4	0.7%
North Charleston	13	2.3%
North Charleston	27	4.8%
North Charleston/Hanahan	22	3.9%
Pineville	4	0.7%
Pinopolis	3	0.5%
Reevesville	3	0.5%
Ridgeville	3	0.5%
St Stephen	8	1.4%
St. George	10	1.8%
Summerville	41	7.3%
Summerville	64	11.4%
Wadmalaw	3	0.5%
West Ashley	5	0.9%
West Ashley	6	1.1%
Unknown or unreported	1	0.2%

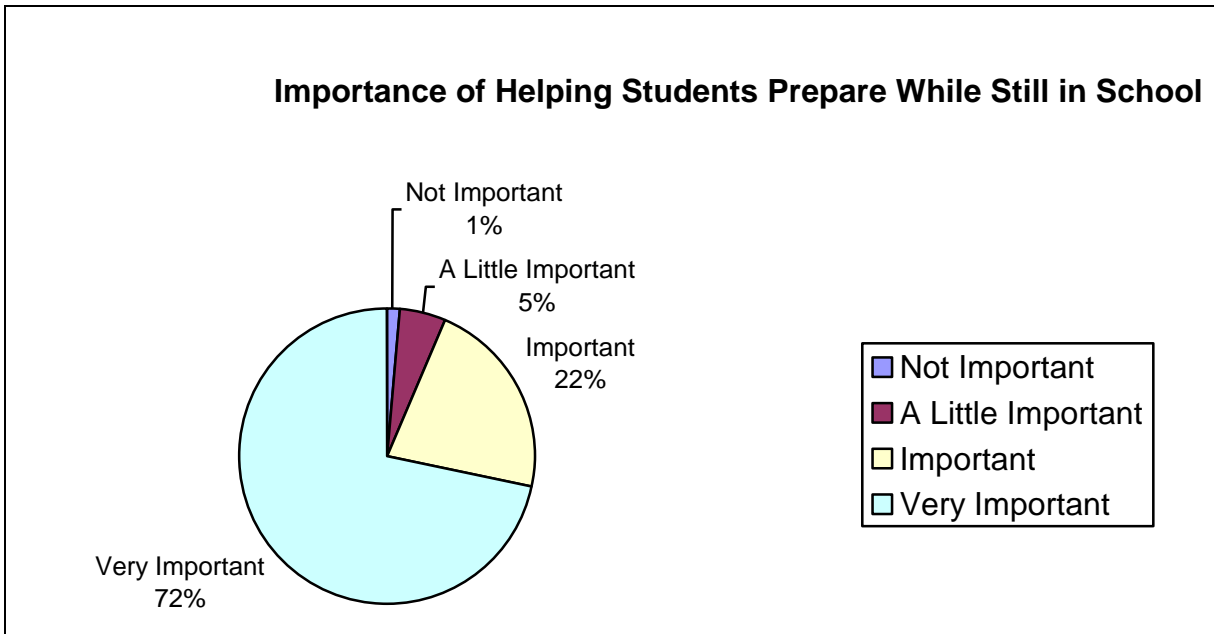
More than half of the parents (51%) surveyed represented students in grades 7 and 8. Again, this is a good representation of data as it allows the preparation of adequate materials to share with parents for students to use early in their career decision process.



Importance of Career Preparation

Parents were asked to rate how important it is to help their child/children prepare for a future career/job while still in school. The majority of parents (71.6%) indicated it was “Very Important”. On a scale of one to four with one being not important and four being very important, parents’ overall rating was 3.64. These findings are significant for TREC as the data indicates the importance of career education to parents.

In conjunction with these findings, almost all parents who completed the survey (95.6%) indicated that they currently discuss the future job/career interests of their children as a way to help the students focus on a future job/career. Herein is another opportunity for TREC to provide career-related information to parents for them to share with their students about future jobs/careers.



South Carolina Career Clusters/Career Pathways

Parents were also asked if they were familiar with how South Carolina's public schools help students focus on career clusters/career pathways as well as their level of familiarity with the proposed career clusters/career pathways available through their children's school district.

Parents are more familiar with the state's efforts than they are with their own child's school as evidenced by 59.1 percent indicating they are familiar with the state's efforts while 53 percent are familiar with their child's school's efforts.

	<i>Are you familiar with How SC schools help students focus on career clusters/pathways</i>	<i>Are you familiar with the proposed career clusters/pathways available through your child's school?</i>
Yes	59.1%	53.3%
No	26.4%	32.6%
Don't Know/Not Sure	14.5%	14.1%

Parents were also asked if they were familiar with the proposed cluster/pathways, did they think they match the actual jobs available in the tri-county region.

- 39.6% indicated they were not familiar with the proposed career clusters/pathways
- 29.8% indicated they did match available jobs
- 24.2% indicated they did not know if they matched available jobs
- 6.4% indicated they do not believe they match available jobs

These percentages highlight a need for awareness efforts that will inform parents about Personal Pathways.

Career Planning

Parents were asked two open-ended questions regarding where they turn to find employment/career planning information for both themselves and their children as well as what information or services would be most helpful in preparing their children for a future job or career.

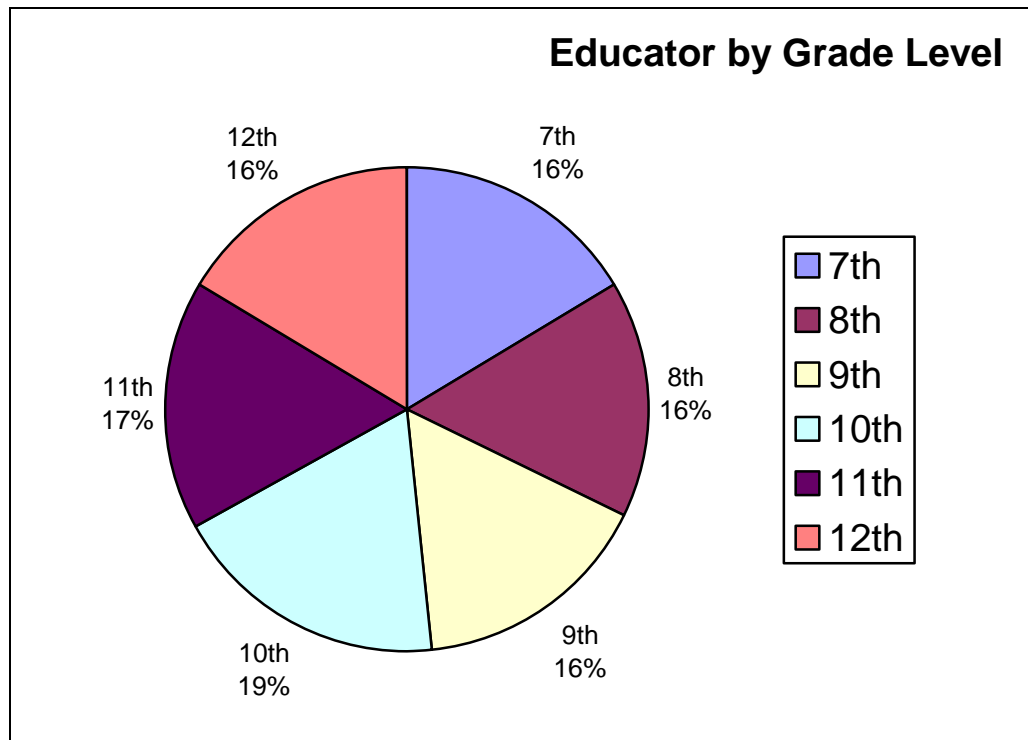
Parents indicated that they would most often consult the guidance counselor at the school as well as the internet to access information about future jobs and careers for their children. They also indicated they would use some type of employment office – the Trident One-Stop or a Job Service to find information about employment. Finally, parents shared that more comprehensive career days/career fairs and more information about future careers would be helpful in preparing their students for future jobs/careers.

Just as with students, parents turn to the guidance department and the Internet for career information. There is an opportunity for TREC to develop a web-based tool to use to educate parents and students about career pathways and available jobs in the region.

Again, parents are identified as a source of career-related information for students. It also seems that the virtual media as well as the school guidance department are great avenues to reach the parents.

Educators

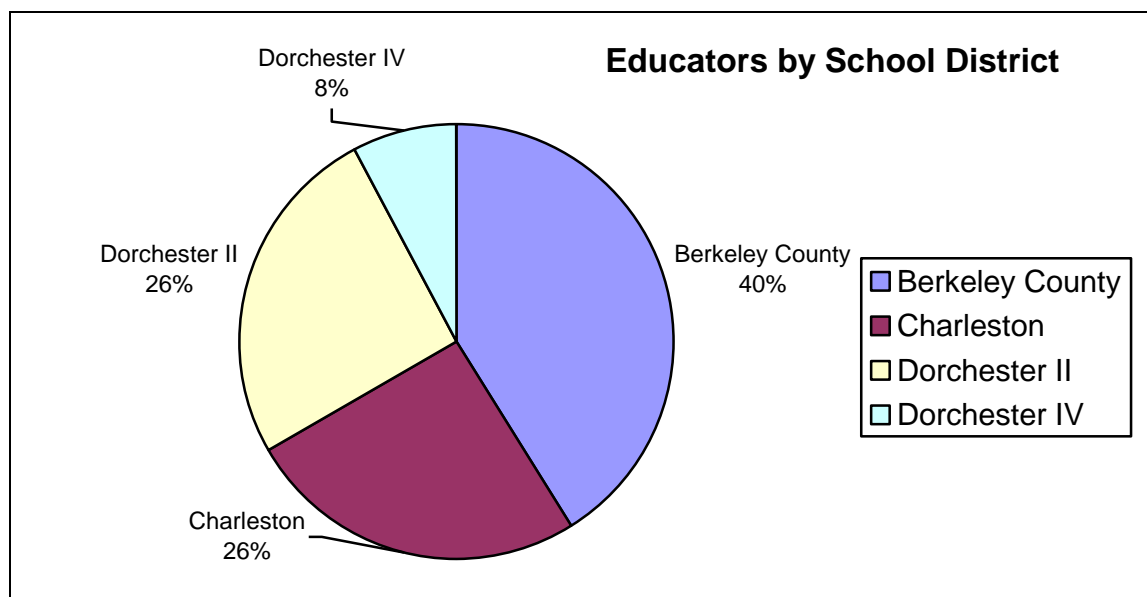
A total of 533 surveys of area educators in the four public school districts were collected and analyzed. The majority of the surveys, 88.9 percent, was completed by teachers, 8.5 percent completed by counselors and three percent by teachers/coaches.



Participants in the survey represented grades levels seven through 12 as well as a variety of fields of study.

- 31.7% teach English/Language Arts
- 30.4% teach Math
- 22.4% teach a Special Area such as Art, Music, Foreign Language, etc.
- 19.5% teach Science
- 16.3% teach Social Studies

The educators participated in the survey in varying levels by district with Berkeley County School District constituting 40% of the survey completers.



South Carolina Career Clusters/Career Pathways

Less than half (48%) of the educators who participated in the survey indicated that they had received information about the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) and its requirements. Another 29% indicated they didn't know/weren't sure and 23.3% indicated they had not received information.

Educators were also asked two open-ended questions regarding what source/organization they received their information about the EEDA and what additional information they would like to receive regarding the EEDA or Personal Pathways.

The primary source of information was the District, their school and guidance counselors.

Over half of those who responded, state that they did not need any additional information about the EEDA. The fact that less than half indicated they had information already about EEDA and more than half of those respondents indicated they did not need information clearly illustrates a lack of understanding among educators about EEDA and its goals and requirements. However, those that did indicate a need for more information about the Act requested information regarding implementation assistance such as cluster posters for the classroom, IGP updates, pathways/clusters updates, business involvement, career information, and sharing EEDA with other personnel like the media specialist.

Again these findings indicate a need for increased awareness about the relevance and purpose of Personal Pathways.

Careers within the Classroom

Educators were asked to what extent they incorporate a career focus into their classroom instruction.

- 65.2% indicated some, occasionally
- 27.9% indicated a great deal, daily or almost daily
- 6.9% indicated not at all

Educators were also asked if they would be interested in professional development specifically designed to help educators incorporate career focuses into classroom instruction.

- 57.9% Somewhat interested
- 29.5% Extremely interested
- 12.6% Not at all interested

To successfully help students with careers, the educators mentioned the following information needs: careers for students with disabilities, reference material including career paths, job requirements and salaries, job task breakdowns, soft skills, curriculum to career pathways, courses for different careers and information about what's available.

These need highlight a great opportunity for TREC to serve as a clearinghouse of information for educators.

Classroom-Business Partnerships

Educators were asked what forms of classroom-business partnerships they seek or need. Educators chose Adopt-A-Teacher/Class/Grade/Career Cluster Initiative (52.9%), Career fairs or others career planning programs (51.1%) and work-based learning programs (46.1%) most often.

<i>Please indicate any form of classroom-business partnerships that you seek or need</i>	
Adopt-A-Teacher/Class/Grade/Career Cluster Initiative: Companies or business professionals partner with a single teacher or classroom to assist in incorporating career-focused classroom instruction	52.9%
Career fairs or other career-planning programs	51.1%
Work-base learning programs: co-ops, interns, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, job shadowing, etc.	46.1%
Business and education team teaching	32.1%
Workforce Education program	29.3%
Career Cluster Advisory Councils	23.9%
Other	7.5%

Educators were asked where they turn for assistance in establishing business partnerships. Most of the responses indicated that educators did not know where to turn to establish such partnerships. The few sources that were listed included the Principal or Assistant Principal and the Career or Guidance Office.

These findings highlight a definite need for business and education partnerships within the region. It also points to an opportunity for TREC to serve as a vehicle to connect education and business partners.

Professional Development

To determine where most educators receive their professional development opportunities, the educators were asked where they had received professional development information and/or services.

- 85% of those responding to the question indicated they received professional development through their school district.
- 11% of the respondents indicated they either did not know or had not received any professional development training.
- Other organizations mentioned included The Education Foundation's WISE class and the Yes Carolina program.

This information serves to provide TREC with organizations to collaborate with when researching, organizing or suggesting appropriate career-related training sessions for educators.

Adult Learners

Because of the time frame for the needs assessment, it was difficult to reach the adult learner population through the survey process. Surveys were distributed through the school district adult education offices; however, students had already completed the semester and were not available. Timing of the research also made reaching college students in the region difficult as the students had already left for the summer by the time the surveys were ready to distribute.

The adult learner survey was promoted through local media and a link to the survey was posted on at least one local television station's website. However, only two persons completed the survey.

Yet, the results of the completed adult learner surveys indicated, as did those completed by parents, educators and students, a need for more information about current jobs/careers as well as a need for that information shared virtually. The survey respondents indicated that they were enrolled in courses to earn a GED and/or to change jobs. Finally, one respondent listed a local post-secondary career center as the organization they would visit when seeking career information.

Using this data as a sort of benchmark, TREC will continue to assess adult learners through the use of the survey as well as by hosting focus groups to confirm and/or expand upon the assessment findings of this study.

Employers

The Trident Workforce Investment Board and the Regional Education Center Advisory Board contracted with the Center for Business research to conduct a workforce employer study.

The survey included inquiries into size and type of the responding firms, educational attainment requirements of employees, education and training programs used and/or needed by employers, recruiting avenues used, and participation in programs that link business and education sectors.

There were 194 survey responses received from firms representing more than 36,000 full time regular employees and more than 45,000 workers overall in the Charleston MSA. This equates to approximately 15 percent of the region's total workforce.

Organizations in the Manufacturing and Education Services sectors responded to the survey in a significantly higher proportion than how they exist in the region. Conversely, firms in the Construction, Retail, and Wholesale sectors responded in proportions significantly lower than their regional presence. Response levels were almost exact for the following sectors: Financial Services, Information, Professional/Scientific/Technical/Business Services, and Other Services (such as repair/maintenance, personal services, etc).

Which business/industry sector best describes your company's primary local operation(s)? (please select one option from the drop down menu)			
Answer Options	# of survey respondents	% of survey respondents	Breakdown of Charleston MSA's establishments
Public Administration/Government or Unclassified	9	4.6%	2.2%
Construction/Mining	6	3.1%	12.5%
Forestry/Fishing/Agriculture	2	1.0%	0.2%
Manufacturing	47	24.2%	2.9%
Transportation/Warehousing/Distribution/Logistics	3	1.5%	3.6%
Utilities	3	1.5%	0.2%
Wholesale Trade	1	0.5%	4.1%
Retail Trade	4	2.1%	15.9%
Financial Services/Insurance	15	7.7%	6.0%
Real Estate and/or Rental/Leasing Services	7	3.6%	5.9%
Information (Media, Telecommunications, Publishing)	9	4.6%	1.3%
Professional, Scientific, Technical & Business Services	33	17.0%	16.6%
Education	22	11.3%	1.0%
Healthcare & Social Services	9	4.6%	8.9%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	3	1.5%	1.3%
Accommodations and/or Food/Beverage Services	5	2.6%	8.0%
Other Services (Personal Services, Repair/Maintenance, Non-Profits, etc)	16	8.2%	9.3%
	194	100%	100%

Source for Region's Business & Government Establishment: 2006 Metro Business Patterns, US Census Bureau and 2006 SC Employment Security Commission.

	Please estimate the total number of employees by type at your company's Charleston area location(s). If your firm has more than one Charleston area location, please provide aggregate estimates:			
Answer Options	Response Median	Response Average	Response Count	Response Sum
Full-time Regular	50	198	185	36,694
Part-time Regular	3	42	121	5,039
Temporary Hires	5	57	100	5,657

Companies by Employment Level

<u># of employees</u>	<u>% of survey respondents</u>	<u>Breakdown of Charleston MSA establishments¹⁻⁴</u>
13.4	50.6%	
5-9	5.4	19.4%
10-19	10.2	14.1%
20-49	16.1	10.2%
50-99	13.4	3.5%
100-249	20.4	1.6%
250-499	6.5	0.4%
500-999	8.1	0.1%
1000 or more	6.5	0.1%
	100.0	100.0%

Source for Region's Business & Government Establishment: 2006 Metro Business Patterns, US Census Bureau and 2006 SC Employment Security Commission.

Is your local firm a: (check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Single location	48%	92
Branch/subsidiary	28%	53
Corporate Headquarters	17%	32
Other (please specify)	11%	21
<i>answered question</i>		190
<i>skipped question</i>		4

Note: Some chose more than one option; most of the "other" responses explained their firms have multiple locations in the Charleston region and/or beyond.

Firms were asked about their recent and future hiring trends with regard to the amount of education and training required of the job candidates. Specifically, the questions were as follows:

Question # 4

“Thinking about the employees your firm has hired locally within the past 6 months, please indicate the percent of these new hires by their highest completed education level. The sum of your responses should equal 100% of new hires.”

- Nearly one out of four or 24 percent reported no new hires in the past six months.
- Of those that indicated they hired during the past six months, 62 percent of respondents indicated they had hired workers with a four year college degree. On average, 38 percent of the employees hired had four year degrees. The table below shows the percentage of respondents for each education level and the average and median percentage of total employees hired.

Education Level Options	Avg percent reported of total hires	Median percent reported of total hires	% Respondents to Q
Less than high school degree	29.7	15.0	13%
HS grad/GED	54.4	50.0	58%
Specific Certification or Diploma (short term training, e.g. truck driving, CISCO/Microsoft, welding)	21.7	20.0	21%
Customized Training (e.g. through ReadySC, Trident One-Stop Career System, etc.)	21.7	10.0	14%
2 yr college/assoc degree	20.1	13.0	32%
4 yr college degree	38.2	25.0	62%
Graduate or Professional degree	20.0	10.0	31%

- 58 percents of respondents indicated their hires were high school graduates/GED. More than half of the positions hired required a high school diploma/GED.
- Nearly one third of respondents reported hiring 20 percent, on average, of their recent hires with Graduate or Professional degrees. A similar trend was reported for recently hired workers with two-year degrees.
- Twenty-five firms or 14 percent reported they hired on average nearly 22 percent of their recent hires through customized training programs. And approximately one in five reported hiring about the same proportion of recent hires from special certification programs such as truck driver training, welding, or specialized information technology training.

Question # 5

Survey participants were also asked a similar question that focused on future workers to be hired in the next one to three years. Respondents reported similar trends.

- At least one in five firms expects to recruit from special short term certification or customized training programs.

Education Level Options	Avg percent reported of total hires	Median percent reported of total hires	% respondents to Q
Less than high school degree	33.1	16.0	10%
HS grad/GED	51.3	50.0	61%
Specific Certification or Diploma (short term training, e.g. truck driving, CISCO/Microsoft, welding)	27.1	21.0	23%
Customized Training (e.g. through ReadySC, Trident One-Stop Career System, etc.)	26.4	15.0	18%
2 yr college/assoc degree	25.8	20.0	38%
4 yr college degree	41.5	28.0	71%
Graduate or Professional degree	26.3	10.0	31%

Next respondents were asked to list up to five of the occupations their Charleston area firm is having the most difficulty filling currently (Question #6).

- 124 respondents answered the question naming one occupation, 103 gave their top two most difficult to fill, 71 listed their top three, 38 listed four hard-to-fill jobs and 26 listed five occupations.
- The top occupational category named overall as most difficult to fill was **manufacturing/production occupations**. The most frequent terms used to describe in-demand production occupations were “machinists, equipment operators/machine operators, welders, assemblers, maintenance/maintenance mechanics, tool makers, manufacturing technicians, production,” etc.

Given the large response to this survey by firms in the manufacturing sector, it is not a surprise that so many occupations in this environment were named. However, this high rate of response among the manufacturing sector might also be interpreted as “the squeaky wheel” that has the greatest need of workforce assistance.

- Mechanics and Maintenance/Repair occupations were frequently specified as being difficult to fill, including those who work on machinery/equipment, on automobiles and aircraft, as well as on buildings/grounds – which means these occupations stretch across both service and manufacturing sectors. While sometimes respondents did not specify type of mechanic - automotive mechanics and machinery/equipment mechanics were the most frequently used terminology among those who did provide specificity.
- Another occupation that might be a “second tier” training opportunity might be electricians, based on responses from many firms.
- **Engineering** was the second most frequently named occupational category. Many specific engineering categories named might operate in a manufacturing environment based on the terminology used – “chemical engineer, electronics engineer, process engineer, manufacturing engineer, quality engineer, tooling engineers, industrial engineers,” etc. The other engineering category specified included construction related such as civil engineers, structural engineers, and geotechnical engineers.

- The third most frequently named difficult-to-fill occupation was **sales**. Some respondents specified “industrial sales,” “telemarketer” or “bilingual telephone sales representative” but many simply reported “sales” or “account executive.”
- The fourth occupational category overall that was reported as most difficult to fill by respondents was what the US Bureau of Labor Statistics terms “**Financial Activities Occupations**.” These typically included those in accounting, finance, banking/lending, and insurance, according to survey responses.
- Fifth was equally divided between **Information Technology** and **Healthcare** occupations.
 - In IT, specific occupations ranged from “computer programmer” to “software developer” and more frequently, generic terms such as simply “computer” or “IT” were listed.
 - Two-thirds of the difficult-to-fill healthcare occupations included various types of nurses (RN, LPN, Occupational Health & Safety Nurse, etc).
- Office/Administrative Support occupations were also named. While some respondents named particular management or administrative support job titles, most indicated trouble filling general management positions and general administrative assistant positions.
- Two other categories - Education occupations and Transportation/Material Moving/Logistics occupations - were apparent as difficult to fill among respondents:
 - Education Occupations listed as difficult to fill ranged from teachers in all the basic subjects to “principal.”
 - Occupations in the Transportation/Logistics sector that were specified as difficult to fill included general terms such as “logistics” or “material movers” to commercially licensed drivers and forklift drivers.

Question # 7

To gauge the level of difficulty in filling these positions, survey participants were asked to rate whether they were having “a bit of difficulty,” “moderate difficulty,” or “extreme difficulty” in filling positions for all occupational categories at the entry-level, mid-level, upper-level of experience as well as managerial levels.

For entry level positions in *all* occupational categories, respondents reported a bit of difficulty or moderate difficulty, but as experience levels rose, the level of difficulty in filling the positions moved to extreme, especially for those with senior level or managerial experience.

Question # 8

Survey participants were asked: When considering the employees your firm expects to hire locally in the next year due to turnover or growth, please indicate any level of shortages in the local workforce. If occupational categories don't apply to your firm, please choose "not applicable".

The occupational categories where respondents predicted *extreme* or *moderate shortages* were:

Occupations	% Reporting Shortages
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	33%
Architecture & Engineering	30%
Business & Financial Occupations	30%
Production Occupations	27%
Computer & Mathematical	27%
Sales & Related	24%
Office & Administrative Support	24%

Many survey respondents wrote in comments about lack of soft skills including basic grammar and communication skills as well as basic math and computer skills. Some stated less of a shortage of people interested in their firm's job openings, but a lack of work ethic and other soft skills such as accountability, dependability and general competency.

Respondents were asked to project the level of difficulty in hiring over the next two to three years, and the results were exactly the same occupational categories in the same order.

Questions # 10 & 11

When asked about external employee education or training programs currently used, many respondents reported Trident Technical College, various trade groups and special certification or registration programs both locally and outside the region. Some also mentioned the "Trident One-Stop" and "WorkKeys" in their responses.

When probed for necessary worker education or training programs (degreed and/or non-degreed) not available locally, less than half of participants responded. Of those, nearly half said "no" or "none" while the other half gave answers such as apprenticeship programs, special certification programs, "engineering", and soft skills training.

The survey then asked firms to rate certain traits (both personal and environmental) which are often issues in recruiting and retaining qualified employees. They were asked to use a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not an obstacle" 3 and 5 being "a great obstacle."

Question #12:
**Personal Traits & Percent of Respondents
Identifying Them as Significant Obstacles (Rated a 4 or 5)
in Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Employees
in the Charleston Metro Area**

1.	Inadequate work ethic	54%
2.	Criminal record	49%
3.	Inadequate reading skills	44%
4.	Inadequate communication skills	44%
5.	Inadequate critical thinking/problem-solving skills	42%
6.	Inadequate teamwork/collaboration skills	41%
7.	Inadequate math skills	39%
8.	Inability to pass drug screenings	38%
9.	Inadequate information technology skills	35%
10.	Lack job-specific skills	34%
11.	Lack of leadership skills	34%

Question # 13

For the environmental traits presented, the percent of respondents who indicated the issue was a significant obstacle (rated a 4 or 5) was:

1.	Competitive wages from other companies	26%
2.	Lack of affordable housing	22%
3.	Transient workforce	17%
4.	Commuting time and distance	15%
5.	Lack of affordable child care	15%

- Respondents were provided an “open-ended-question” opportunity to describe any other obstacles their firms face in recruiting and retaining qualified employees in the Charleston area. Common responses included: high gas prices; lack of affordable, reliable childcare or childcare at “atypical” hours; lack of public mass transportation from outlying areas; high-cost commute from affordable housing areas to job centers; perception of poor work ethic among youth/recent graduates; and lack of soft skills. These comments were often emphasized with comments such as “especially for entry-level workers.”
- Some firms commented that they were often receiving resumes and applications from job candidates with high level degrees and experience for lower skill level or part time positions.
- Past studies conducted in the region have indicated a high level of under-employment (many workers are in jobs at levels lower than their qualifications). As the Forward Charleston/Angelou study released in 2005 for the Charleston region reports in its recommendations of the community’s target clusters, while there is a base of firms existing within each of the recommended clusters, there does not exist a depth of firms within each cluster. In other words, while someone may hold a job in a particular area, there may not be an abundance of similar jobs in other firms in existence in the area, providing little opportunity for growth/advancement within a specific field. The fact that employers often receive resumes from candidates essentially over qualified is an indication of the overall limited corporate environment the region offers because of its size.

Question # 15

To gauge competitiveness and desirability of work environments among respondents to the survey, companies were asked to indicate which of the following workplace incentives their firms currently offer to employees.

Incentive	% of responding firms who offer
Free parking	85%
Health insurance	81%
Retirement/401K	80%
Casual dress codes	66%
Support volunteer/community involvement	61%
Recognition programs	59%
Vacation packages	58%
Tuition reimbursement	52%
Flextime/flexible schedules	46%
Incentives or signing bonuses	40%
Telecommuting/working from home	18%
Job sharing	9%
Free lunches/meals	8%
Child care subsidies	7%
On-site child care	3%
123 respondents to this question; 828 responses	

- When asked which workplace incentives your firm currently offers that are the most-effective, “flextime” or flexible work schedules and paid time off for vacation or personal time were the most common answers. The other most common incentives were health insurance, bonuses, and 401k plans.

Question # 17

“Considering the current labor market, please indicate the extent to which your company is doing the following;” Responses are ranked in order by the percent who stated “a great deal/frequently.”

	Somewhat/ occasionally	A great deal/ frequently
Recruiting qualified employees locally	33%	52%
Train and promote in-house employees	35%	52%
Online/Internet based recruiting	34%	40%
Participate in job fairs or career days	31%	32%
Using co-ops and internships	37%	21%
Recruiting from different regions of the country	28%	20%
Recruiting from other parts of the state	39%	15%
Hire fewer than needed and pay overtime	30%	14%
Hiring temporary employees through an employment agency	37%	13%
Hiring those less qualified and training in-house/ using on-the-job training	50%	13%
Using automation/ technology vs. human capital	35%	13%
Using apprenticeship programs	23%	12%
Leaving jobs unfilled	38%	11%
Recruit from work-based high school programs	20%	10%
Hiring former temporary workers as regular workers	35%	9%
Participate on EEDA (Educ. & Econ. Devt. Act) Career Cluster Advisory Council	11%	9%
Recruiting in other countries	8%	6%
Hiring multi-lingual employees	43%	6%
Participating in Adopt-a-Teacher/Class/Grade programs	15%	6%
Hiring non-English-speaking workers	9%	5%
Hiring lower skilled employees and training them using outside resources	22%	4%

- Based on the above responses, about half of respondents are finding the employees they need locally, and from the other half, up to 20% are recruiting from other parts of the state or different regions of the country. A commonly used recruiting tool is the Internet (40%). It is also apparently is a common practice to hire from within for open positions, even if that requires a good deal of in-house training.
- There appears to be an opportunity for more linking with work-based high school programs such as internships and other education based programs such as “adopt-a-teacher/class/grade” and “career days.” Also, though approximately one in three survey participants reported frequently using job fairs as a recruiting method, there may also be an opportunity to make this a more effective tool.

Conclusions and Gaps in the Findings

Through surveys of students, parents and educators, while some awareness of the EEDA exists along with the concept of implementing career clusters/pathways, there is limited understanding of the details of the program and what and how it is to be implemented.

Students and parents have a solid understanding that preparing for a career or future job should begin early – while children are in school.

The internet is the common source of information about future careers and jobs – for both students and parents and should be considered as a valuable tool for TREC in serving these audiences. While the internet can become a great resource, considerations should be made for community members who may not have ready access to virtual information.

Because the internet can be the source of both accurate and inaccurate information, the Trident Regional Education Center should develop a web-based strategy to educate students and parents about future careers and resources. The strategy could also prove useful in assisting regional employers in their hiring process since 40% of those surveyed use the Internet to do so.

The Career Office/Guidance Counselor is also looked to as a source for career information – not only by students and parents but teachers as well. The counselors are a critical link to preparing students for the future and should be a key area of focus for TREC. TREC should also consider follow-up surveys or additional research to better understand the challenges and needs of the career counselors working in the four districts.

There is opportunity to link the business community with the schools through exposing students to the types of jobs and careers available in the community. Career fairs, career days, guest speakers, internships, and job shadowing were cited often by students, teachers and parents. Currently, each high school plans individual career fairs/career days. The result is the larger high schools attract a larger number of businesses providing more learning options to students. The smaller and more rural high schools are challenged in securing enough business participation, thus limiting the exposure these students have to the types of jobs and careers available in the region. Additionally, most high schools only hold career fairs on an annual basis. TREC should advocate for a more regional approach to career fairs in order to secure a larger number of businesses as well as to be able to hold career fairs more often than once a year.

TREC could also explore opportunities to coordinate and facilitate business and education partnerships within the region. The Center could help educators connect business leaders with the classroom as well as coordinate efforts to provide professional development sessions with business leaders and educators where each learns about the environment of the other.

The workforce survey results show some specific clusters or job types rising to the top of those “most-needed,” indicating fields of study and/or training that local education and training organizations might emphasize or expand on in order to address the needs of regional employers.

The results also highlight an opportunity for more training or education on improving certain soft/personal skills within the current and future workforce such as general communication skills and critical thinking/problem solving skills in order to meet employers’ needs more effectively.

Gap Analysis Strategic Initiative Sessions

On June 06, the Trident RECAB hosted its gap analysis strategic session to gauge the potential gaps and strategic initiatives of the preliminary survey data.

The Trident RECAB also co-hosted a Personal Pathways (EEDA) Forum on June 16 where regional efforts of the Act were reviewed. Participants included public education, higher education and business professionals who discussed the needs and regional solutions. The Forum also served to uncover strategies useful to foster a seamless transition for students from k12 to training, post-secondary education, military service or employment.

Finally, the Trident RECAB hosted four regional gap review sessions in June 2008 by school district to outline the findings of the study.

Based on the findings of these sessions, the RECAB drafted the following questions with recommended solutions to assist in creating its gap initiatives.

Question 1: How is Personal Pathways marketed within the region? How can TREC reach all clients about Personal Pathways and its mission?

Recommended solution:

- Develop a strategic marketing campaign targeted to each client population

Question 2: How can TREC assist in sharing career information with TREC clients?

Recommended solution:

- Create Regional Career Awareness initiatives that include a variety of career professionals, career sessions, career media and career information

Question 3: How can TREC engage the Internet, Parents and Guidance Departments as resources of career information?

Recommended solutions:

- Develop education/outreach programs
- Institute virtual TREC

Question 4: How can TREC assist in building regional coordination of services to ensure seamless transitions?

Recommended solutions:

- Convene partnerships across all levels (P-20 Councils) – secondary, post-secondary, business, non-profit organizations; economic and workforce developers, service providers, civic leaders, faith-based leaders
- Update virtual TREC with relevant regional service provider information

Question 5: How can TREC build education and business partnerships?

Recommended solution:

- Create a formal, coordinated education and business process using a previous Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce/Education Foundation model

Trident Regional Education Center Advisory Board Identified Gaps

Upon review of the survey results, strategic planning session, Personal Pathways (EEDA) Forum hosted June 16 and the district-wide gap review sessions, the Trident RECAB offers the following by regional education center responsibilities as the identified gaps of the regional needs assessment.

1) provide services to students and adults for career planning, employment seeking, training, and other support functions;

A need exists for the following:

- regional career information for students, parents, educators
- career awareness/pathways in the region
- virtual career information for the region
- awareness of services provided by regional organizations
- service coordination among regional organizations
- career information/instruction in the classroom
- a process to share relevant information with parents
- a connection between employers and potential employees of the community

(2) provide information, resources, and professional development programs to educators

A need exists for the following:

- strategies to connect careers to the curriculum
- an avenue to explore and address career needs with guidance departments
- alternate formats of professional development for educators

(3) provide resources to school districts for EEDA compliance and accountability

A need exists for the following:

- relevant awareness of Personal Pathways for parents, educators, and students
- awareness of career clusters in the region

(4) provide information and resources to employers including, but not limited to, education partnerships, career-oriented learning, and training services

(5) facilitate local connections among businesses and those involved in education

A need exists for the following:

- a formal education and business effort
- a thorough exposure to career opportunities through multiple venues for the community
- curriculums/lesson plans that address the region's industry shortages

(6) work with school districts and institutions of higher education to create and coordinate workforce education programs

A need exists for the following:

- soft skills training for the current and future workforce
- training for upcoming career clusters/segments

Trident Regional Education Center Advisory Board Gap Analysis Strategic Recommendations

To respond accurately to the needs that have surfaced from the regional gap analysis, the Trident RECAB offers the following five gap analysis strategic recommendations:

I. Personal Pathways Awareness Campaign

To create an infectious atmosphere for Personal Pathways within the region, the RECAB recommends an initiative that would introduce, build awareness for, produce understanding of and compel involvement in Personal Pathways.

The strategies include:

- Advocate for statewide efforts through the RECC Coordinators Team
- Create a regional marketing plan/message for each TREC client (students, employers, parents, adult learners and educators)
- Develop client specific material that explains the “how” and “why” of Personal Pathways
- Promote Personal Pathways success stories
- Engage regional community partners including service providers, faith-based organizations, chambers, school boards, civic organizations and rural communities to share Personal Pathways
- Distribute a TREC e-newsletter
- Present the impact of Personal Pathways locally, regionally, state-wide and nationally
- Engage all media outlets - Internet, television, radio
- Recognize avenues for parental and adult learner involvement

II. Regional Career Awareness

To provide relevant career information to TREC clients, the RECAB offers an initiative that includes regional career professionals, sessions, media and information. These four components would consist of but not be limited to the following:

Career professionals: identify a regional career counselor and/or business liaison; institute a speakers' bureau of career and college speakers to review job requirements, career ladders, soft skills, courses, and job opportunities

Career sessions: institute career seminars/assemblies, career days including job interest surveys; parent career nights, regional career month with surveys and fairs and business topic workshops

Career media: create career videos, websites, webinars, computer programs, online interest surveys, booklets, pamphlets, brochures, magazines, handouts, podcasts, and courses

Career Information: present the following regional information: career paths for different educational levels, workforce skills, job requirements, career development, matching coursework to careers, careers and clusters, career opportunities, labor market information and information similar to SCOIS, KUDER, Junior Achievement, Post and Courier Tuesday's Career Center page

The client specific strategies include but are not limited to:

Students: target students with student-produced career-related videos, podcasts, streaming video in the career section of the library, school classroom, lunch room, morning homeroom shows and virtual TREC

Adult Learners/Parents: target parents through employers/chambers, faith-based organizations, Trident One Stop Center, lunch and learn sessions, adult learning locations, shopping centers; pod casts and virtual TREC

Counselors/Educators: target educators with quick career videos (YouTube model); internships for educators (Santee Cooper model), regional professional development including seminars and conferences

III. Personal Pathways/Careers Connection

To coordinate the relevant and timely delivery of career resources, the RECAB suggests an initiative that will provide up to date information for the Internet, Parents and Guidance Departments.

The client specific strategies include but are not limited to:

Internet: update virtual TREC as a relevant user-friendly region specific site

Parents: introduce to virtual TREC, share the TREC e-newsletter, career DVD, host "lunch and learn" sessions; career tool kits, distribute information to business and service partners

Guidance Departments: utilize "in-service" days, share TREC e-newsletter, career tool kits, share career videos, provide email updates, share relevant workforce data (skills gaps) and business needs, coordinate industry and college tours, replicate WISE/PFAD for counselors, convene for best practices

IV. Partnerships

To assist with the seamless transition of TREC clients, the RECAB offers an initiative that will build partnerships to support a globally competitive region.

The strategies include:

- Link and promote regional service providers on virtual TREC
- Convene service providers to coordinate service collaborations
- Promote dual enrollment programs
- Promote workforce education programs including the Adult Education PACE program
- Collaborate with higher education faculty regarding Personal Pathways and teacher/counselor education
- Collaborate with district administrators regarding Personal Pathways
- Collaborate with regional college guidance professionals
- Collaborate with regional professional associations including Toastmasters for assistance with soft skill building
- Conduct ongoing regional assessments
- Regularly host the Personal Pathways (EEDA) Forum (instituted June 16, 2008)
- Publish and regularly update TREC's directory of service providers

V. Coordinated Education and Business Collaborations

To facilitate local connections between education and business partners, the RECAB purposes an initiative that would create partnerships between the two entities.

The strategies include:

- Host seminars to share best practices to:
 - Demonstrate the integration of careers in the classroom
 - Introduce the partnership requirements of employers and educators
 - Identify current workforce needs
 - Demonstrate the creation of modules to use in the classroom
 - Introduce work-based learning requirements of education
 - Introduce collaboration benefits
- Institute a career mentoring/job shadowing program (students/teachers)
- Institute business tours (students/teachers)
- Institute K12 team teaching/adjunct faculty
- Institute Adopt-A-Teacher/Class
- Institute Adopt-A-Career Cluster/Major
- Institute a high school co-op program
- Convene career cluster advisory committees
- Identify work-based learning sites
- Organize a database of business opportunities and education needs
- Utilize WorkKeys to teach soft skills
- Utilize the Individual Graduation Plan reports to analyze education and business needs
- Connect to small businesses



Personal Pathways to success™

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rkerr@hagoodkerr.com

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deb.campeau@hcahealthcare.com

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dfnye@fnbsc.com

Steve Smith
Member-at-Large
Core One Mortgage
steve.smith@coreonemortgage.com

Joan Anderson
Charleston County School District
Joan_anderson@charleston.k12.sc.us

Quince Cody
Regions Bank
quince.cody@regions.com

Lou DuBon
Agfa Materials Corporation
Lou.dubon@agfa.com

Jan Faulkner
Janf1@homesc.com

Larry Hargett
Dorchester County Council
lshargett@aol.com

Ruth Jordan
Elj32@aol.com

Keith Oliver
Home Telephone Company, Inc.
Keith.Oliver@hometelco.com

Mary Runyon
West Ashley High School
Mary_Runyon@charleston.k12.sc.us

Dr. Mary Thornley
Trident Technical College
mary.thornley@tridenttech.edu

Joan Ustin
Joan K. Ustin & Associates
joankustin@comcast.net

Dr. Frances Welch
College of Charleston
welchf@cofc.edu

Clarence Wright
SCE&G
cwright@scana.com

Jim Young
SC State Ports Authority
Jyoung@scspa.com

Catherine Giddens
Founding Partner representative
Charleston Regional Technology Center
cgiddens@ed.sc.gov

Melody Taylor
Fiscal Agent representative
Trident Technical College
melody.taylor@tridenttech.edu

Allen Wutzdorff
Administrative Partner representative
The Education Foundation
awutzdorff@EdFound.net

Staff:
Patricia A. Ferguson
Coordinator
2750 Speissegger Drive, Suite 100
North Charleston, SC 29405
843.805.3017
pferguson@scpathways.org